

SOLDIERS OF HUMANITY

BY MICHAEL WHITE

THE terror was abroad in the land, and the white men who knew looked at one another with serious faces. He was a high official of the Indian Medical Department, and in his hand was one of those parchments you see hung in doctors' offices,—usually a Latin script with beautiful flourishes and a big gilt seal in the bottom right hand corner. This particular parchment set forth that Catherine Bruce Carey had attained the degree of doctor of medicine, and was fully competent to practise the same according to the charter of the University of Pennsylvania. Miss Carey, who sat beside the high medical official's desk, presented a trim figure in her well fitting khaki suit, with her pith helmet half shading features none the less attractive because displaying characteristic strength. Perhaps her deep violet eyes were the most significant,—wide and thoughtful, yet lit occasionally with flashes of naïve humor. Above the two a punka flapped back and forth, while native clerks and orderlies slipped noiselessly in and out. Presently the Indian medical officer spoke.

"I think you said you had not actually practised medicine?"

"That is true," she replied. "In the first place, I took it up as a study leading out of chemistry; but when I decided to do a little exploring I thought it would prove useful."

"Ah—yes, you have recently been up in Nepal. I remember reading your account of the Dhangari Valley in the papers. You—er—must have had some remarkable experiences."

"Well," a slight reminiscent smile touched the corners of her expressive lips, "I certainly had a flourishing practice there. I guess that was my best passport through difficulty."

"No doubt, no doubt!" nodded the other.

"You see," she went on, "I was going down to Bombay to catch a steamer for Europe and thence home to the United States, when I heard the epidemic had broken out in your province, and that you were badly in need of physicians. I thought you could use my services, particularly after my experience with natives."

"Yes, the need is urgent, and I fully appreciate your offer. At such a time women physicians are most desirable, because the natives do not regard their entry into the house—behind the purdah, you know—as a violent intrusion. That is our chief difficulty. Cases are concealed in the women's quarters, which men physicians cannot reach, and so the contagion spreads. I should like to accept your offer; but—" He looked at her with hesitation.

"You do not doubt my proficiency or my physical condition for the work?" she questioned.

"Certainly not!" he replied. "Six months in the heights of Nepal ought to put anyone in first class fighting trim; but, you see, you could be of the greatest use to us in the field—there is always the odd chance of being bowled over on the firing line, and your friends in America might blame me."

"My friends in America didn't prevent my going to Nepal, and that was not exactly an afternoon picnic."

"Not exactly," smiled the medical officer. He thought for a moment before putting a question of considerable relative importance. "How are you off for servants? Will they stand by you at a pinch?"

"Ahmad Kerim and his wife were with me in Nepal," she answered, "and I was wondering how to get rid of them in Bombay. They vow they will follow me to the ends of the earth. They are Mohammedans from the northwest provinces. I feel sure that they will stand by me."

"Queer people, these," mused the officer. "When I first set foot in this country, who should be waiting for me but my father's servant's son! How he knew I was coming passes comprehension. He has ruled my household—and incidentally myself—ever since. I presume his son will do the same for my son twenty years hence. In any case, the character you give Ahmad Kerim removes three parts of my reluctance. Yes, I shall be glad to accept your services—more than glad, in the present emergency. The fact is," he continued, "young Fraser in the district of Satarabad wired me that the epidemic had broken out there with great virulence, and that he feared he would not be able to cope with it single

handed. But at present we have no one to send. Will you go to Satarabad?"

"Certainly," she responded. And there was nothing in her voice or manner to indicate that she was accepting a particularly dangerous mission: on the contrary, rather eagerness for it.

"And—er—you can start without delay?"

"At once—by the next train."

"Very well. I will have your appointment as assistant to Dr. Fraser at Satarabad made out and gazetted. He will post you regarding local conditions when you get there. But, as you can't go on to Satarabad until the down country mail tonight, your first order from medical headquarters is to make our bungalow your temporary resting place. My wife will restock your food supply, as it will not do to trust to luck in Satarabad, and in the meantime we can chat over a few details."

SO Miss Carey went down by the night mail in a compartment filled with women flying oversea from the terror, who regarded her almost as unfeminine because knowledge had won for her the mastery over unreasoning panic. In the early gray of morning Ahmad Kerim's wife saw to it that tea was prepared for the Hakim (doctor) Memsahib, and shortly after Ahmad Kerim was dragging her baggage out on the platform of Satarabad. No one was permitted to board the train; for the place had been strictly quarantined. Except in this instance of a Government order permitting Miss Carey to alight, the few trains on the line fled past as if driven by the specter of a nightmare. Thus the train went on,



Datta Moved Cringingly Forward.

leaving a white woman to fight for the dark mass of humanity plunged in all manner of superstitious ignorance.

Her first glimpse of Satarabad did not distinguish it from the usual small native town,—a straggling mass of thatched mud hovels, with here and there a temple roof or a slightly more pretentious dwelling. The railway barely touched it on one side, and on the other a camp of gleaming white tents indicated Miss Carey's field of work. On the platform a group of spindle-shanked natives seemed to be taking in the situation with the philosophy of indifference. With these Ahmad Kerim had got into a hot argument, the result of which was

that he approached Miss Carey with a grave face. "Oh, Memsahib, something very bad has happened!"

"Well, what is it?" she demanded.

"These people, whom the Memsahib will notice are of low birth and not to be compared with those of the country from which this servant comes, say that Fraser Sahib was stricken by the hand of Kismet yesterday, died swiftly, and was buried at sunset."

MISS CAREY was naturally startled. If true, it meant that she was temporarily in medical charge of the district and local conditions with which she was unfamiliar. She did not waste discussion with Ahmad Kerim, moved to heap scorn on an inferior race; but hastened to the camp.

The disorder into which she found conditions had promptly descended lent strong color to the first rumor that Dr. Fraser had fallen in the discharge of his duty. And it was not easy to obtain a clear report of the circumstances. In the first place, Bhim Datta, Dr. Fraser's native assistant, had absented himself on the plea of sickness, and it became necessary to fall back upon Ahmad Kerim's muscular form of persuasion to elicit even evasive answers. It was then Miss Carey appreciated the value of a native servant who regarded her interests so entirely as his own that woe betide anyone but himself who attempted to dispoil her of an anna! But that was his prerogative according to the most ancient custom, and in justice to him it must be said had she parted from her last coin he would thereafter have served her for nothing. Meanwhile a newly made grave

in the compound was pointed out as Dr. Fraser's last resting place, and Miss Carey was informed that all his effects had been burned by his direction.

"These people be all liars," said Ahmad Kerim in delivering his opinion. "The Memsahib will please to remember that we are in a strange country where no one is to be trusted. Doubtless Fraser Sahib is dead; but who knows how that came to pass? The Memsahib is fortunate in having this servant for her protector."

Then he glared at the gathering of camp attendants in a manner to intimate that it required only a word from her for him to cut all their throats. Simultaneously his wife jangled around among the tents, voicing her opinion that such a race of pigs was honored beyond reason in having the Memsahib come that distance to minister to their misfortune.

The urgent need of immediately taking Dr. Fraser's place for the time being compelled Miss Carey to set aside further investigation of his death. She promptly wired the news to provincial medical headquarters, and began reorganizing the chaotic native staff. It might be expected that one herewith would plunge into a description of the horrors of an epidemic in India; but that would in no wise fit Miss Carey's view of the situation. Disease and death were to her perfectly natural phenomena, to be fought with all her ability; but that did not include regarding things with the eye of emotion, though subconsciously she was far from being unsympathetic when confronted by distress.

She was inspecting the dispensary tent when she noticed a crumpled sheet of paper on the floor. She picked it up and began to read what were evidently notes Dr. Fraser had been making for his last report. They proved to be mere routine details, and ended in a blank space. But what roused her curiosity was his repeated insertion of the chemical formula $Cu\ So_4$, followed by the word "heat," in places where it bore no reference to the text.

She understood, of course, that $Cu\ So_4$ signified copper sulphate, a valuable disinfectant; but there was nothing to show from his notes why he laid such emphasis on that substance as applied to heat. She wondered what he meant by it, and summoned the native who had thus far given the clearest account of Dr. Fraser's death. But he professed

ignorance concerning the paper and Dr. Fraser's use of copper sulphate. Ahmad Kerim, who followed Miss Carey round like a watchdog, took the privilege of a familiar servant and was for beating information out of the man with a stick.

"Ahmad," she reproved him severely, "if you begin fighting here I shall discharge you at once."

"Very well, Memsahib. But I think before long you change your mind. These people all telling lies. They bribed or frightened by somebody: soon we shall find out."

Whether they were or not, the conclusion Miss Carey reached was that Dr. Fraser's mind might have begun

to wander while scribbling down his notes. Heat? Yes, it was hot, every moment growing more so. Possibly the seizure and the heat had affected his brain. Yet otherwise the notes were perfectly coherent. It was somewhat inexplicable, and she secured the paper for further examination.

Followed then work in earnest, not the least exacting incident of which was an interview with the native police magistrate. She had to make it plain to him that, although a woman, she was the law regarding sanitary regulations in those parts pending the arrival of another medical officer.

IN the midst of it all, Bhim Datta, Dr. Fraser's absconding assistant, turned up, looking in good health, but with an urgent plea for another member of his family. His eldest son, a fine boy whose chief duty in life would be to light his father's funeral pyre, had been stricken down, and was feared to be at the point of death. Datta explained that his house was but a short distance on the other side of the railway, and that he had brought his private bullock cart to convey Miss Carey thither. He entreated her to consent, such medical knowledge as he had acquired being of no avail in the emergency.

Miss Carey was not inclined to regard Datta favorably; but that bore no consideration with a child's life at stake. She hastily gathered a few necessities, and was presently being jolted along on her first rescue case. In a little the cart was being driven into a mud walled court, three sides of which were occupied with the family dwellings. At night time the center was reserved for the family cows, and in a niche of one of the walls was a little altar dedicated to the family god. An oil lamp was kept burning before it, and a sprig of the sacred toolsi plant was carefully nurtured at the feet of the idol.

The scene was familiar to Miss Carey; so she merely gave a cursory glance around as she descended from the cart and followed Datta into the apartments reserved for the women. She found herself in a darkened and earth smelling chamber. She could barely discern the string bed on which the sick child was laid. Her first order was for light and air; then she proceeded to an examination of her patient. In a few moments she lifted her head, and directed a searching look on the anxious faces of the women gathered to the spot; Datta remaining just on the inside of the purdah, or separating curtain.

"This child," she said, "is not suffering from the epidemic. He has been poisoned."

"Poisoned!" ejaculated the women. "Oh, Memsahib, that is impossible!"

Miss Carey had gathered sufficient information of native life to know that it was quite possible when the jealousy of a second wife entered the zenana. In any case she was convinced of her diagnosis. "I say the child has been poisoned—or drugged with some opiate!"

The women at once threw up their jangling arms, in unison vowing that such was not and could not be the case.

MISS CAREY'S glance, sweeping into the corners of the room, fell upon a leather trunk plastered with European hotel labels, and bearing the significant initials H. S. F. Moreover, the trunk was open, disclosing among other objects a medical officer's uniform. She strode to the trunk, brushing the women aside, and bending over it discovered that the contents had evidently afforded pastime for youthful hands, particularly one of those little cases physicians carry containing hypodermic needles and glass tubes of tablets. One of the tubes had been uncorked, and two or three of the tablets lay among the disordered garments. She read the label quickly, and light broke on her face. The child had probably imagined the tablets were sweets, eaten one, and fortunately found it distasteful. Also it was fortunate that he had chanced upon a comparatively harmless opiate instead of a deadly poison.

"How did this come here?" she demanded of the women, pointing to the trunk. "I was told that all Fraser Sahib's effects were burned."

The women shrunk back, refusing to answer. Miss Carey repeated her question in a more authoritative tone, and Datta moved cringing forward.

"Memsahib, I will explain. As the gods are my witness, I am a truthful man, and will not deny that is Fraser Sahib's trunk! Oh, Memsahib, he was the father and mother of this unworthy being, plunged into unutterable grief at his death, and—"

"Yes, yes!" Miss Carey interposed impatiently. "I want to know how Fraser Sahib's trunk comes to be here."

"Memsahib, out of the goodness of that Lord among Sahibs' heart, he gave it to me before he died! That is how it was not burned, and comes to be here."

Miss Carey reflected for a short space, and turned to apply the usual remedies to the child. Possessing nothing

to discredit Datta's words, she was compelled to accept his explanation. When the desired effect was produced in the child, she gave the women instructions how to act in her absence, and left with doubt kindled in her mind regarding the natural end of Dr. Fraser. Combined with her discovery of his trunk in Datta's house, rose mentally that chemical formula $Cu\ So_4$ sprinkled through Dr. Fraser's notes. Somehow the two seemed to bear a connection, though in what manner she was unable to form any definite theory.

ON reaching camp, Ahmad Kerim received her with a formidable sword stuck in his waistband, and the air of a man holding important information.



Ahmad Kerim Came Bearing the Limp Form of Dr. Fraser.

"The Memsahib will remember," he began, "her servant's opinion of these people. That they are all liars there is no doubt. It is a sham grave, Memsahib, in which they said they had buried Fraser Sahib. That I have discovered."

"A sham grave!" she repeated with emphasis.

"Let the Memsahib see for herself," suggested Ahmad Kerim.

Miss Carey at once followed Ahmad Kerim to the spot. There he demonstrated that only a few inches of soil had been disturbed. The question then of where Dr. Fraser had been interred led to the one rapidly becoming more insistent of the cause of his death? To the chemical formula $Cu\ So_4$ in Dr. Fraser's notes and the trunk found in Datta's house, was now added the false grave. She was inclined to set more faith in Ahmad Kerim's judgment.

She again took the notes in hand and read them through carefully. The notes and the formula were absolutely disconnected. Hence it was possible that the formula was intended to signify something apart from the notes, to be deciphered under cover of obviously harmless writing. $Cu\ So_4$ —copper sulphate—heat. She paced back and forth, struggling with the problem. It might be the key of the whole situation! Copper sulphate—heat! True, the tropical afternoon sun blazed down with an intensity that should have warned her to seek shelter. And it fell upon the paper she held in her hand, parching it to a condition of crispness. What in the world might Dr. Fraser have meant? She glanced at the paper again and fixed upon it an intent scrutiny of newly awakened interest. In the blank space there now appeared a few yellow lines, suggestive of pen strokes. Heat—copper sulphate—heat!

Suddenly the light of an inspiration broke on her features. She hastened into the dispensary tent and lit a small alcohol lamp. She held the paper above the flame, and presently Dr. Fraser's handwriting appeared legibly in the blank space. Heat from the sun's power-

ful rays had given her the first clue. She now understood that Dr. Fraser had written in a solution of copper sulphate ($Cu\ So_4$), to which was added a small quantity of nitric acid. And this was the message kindled by the sun's rays:

Fear bowled over by fever or epidemic, not sure which. That rascal Datta has been stealing my things. Refuses to obey orders. Barely concealed threats. Perhaps finish me. Look out for these people! Not to be trusted. Inform dis—

An indecipherable scrawl ran into a wandering line, as if strength had failed Dr. Fraser in an effort to add a further warning or request to his successor.

Apparently there was little mystery left. Datta was undoubtedly a thief, and probably a murderer. As legal people put it, the next move was to discover the body, since for some inexplicable reason a false grave had been substituted.

MISS CAREY stepped back a pace and almost collided with someone. She was startled until reassured by Ahmad Kerim's voice.

"It is I, Memsahib, the servant of the Presence."

"Ahmad," she turned quickly to him, "that man, Bhim Datta!"

"Yes, Memsahib."

"I wish to see him here. I must find out what has happened to Dr. Fraser. I believe he has been murdered."

Without a word Ahmad Kerim strode toward the entrance.

"Ahmad," she halted him, "where are you going?"

"Did not the Memsahib order me to bring Datta—in pieces if it be her pleasure?"

"Certainly not in pieces!" she hastily enjoined. "I want to question him. Do you understand?"

"Very well, Memsahib."

Ahmad went away, and Miss Carey returned to her work in the camp, but with her thoughts now entirely centered on the fate of her predecessor. She eagerly looked for Ahmad's return, and in less time than she expected beheld him striding across the compound, driving Datta before him like a sheep. Every few paces Datta glanced timorously over his shoulder, to meet a tigerish grin on Ahmad's face and a touch of the swordhilt not reassuring to a treacherous nature. On coming before Miss Carey, Datta was for casting himself at her feet; but Ahmad's grip brought him to an upright position with a jolt.

"Datta," she began with incisive severity, "you have not spoken the truth about Dr. Fraser's trunk or his death; for I have evidence to the contrary in his writing. That you must have overlooked—in the burning of his effects. Neither was he buried in the place stated. Where was he buried?"

Datta began to whine ignorance; but she cut him short.

"Listen, Datta! I have but to nod my head, and I honestly believe my servant will carve you into very small pieces! Where was Dr. Fraser buried?"

"Oh, Memsahib, I will speak the truth!" pleaded Datta. "It is as the

Protector of the Innocent says, and Fraser Sahib was not buried in that place. He was taken to an abandoned temple ghat by the lake so that he might die in peace."

"So that when the Sahib was helpless he might surely die, and not be found, thou dog who ate from his hand!" broke in Ahmad Kerim with infinite scorn. "So that thou might seize what was his without fear of discovery, thou descendant of Gehenna-burnt fathers! The Memsahib will understand," he turned to Miss Carey, "that among these idol worshipers this is not a new thing."

Miss Carey at once decided that she would investigate the temple ghat, and told Ahmed to see that Datta led the way straight thither.

THUS, with Datta under Ahmad's watchful eye, they took a path that led for a considerable distance through the jungle. At last they came in sight of the tank and the ruined temple ghat on its bank. Their approach disturbed an ominous gathering of crows and vultures perched on the grotesquely sculptured summits crumbling to decay. At the entrance Ahmad insisted that Miss Carey remain outside while he went in with Datta.

"This man may have some trick," he explained; "therefore it is best that but two of us perish—for, by Allah! I will not leave him behind!"

Ahmad drew his sword and pricked Datta on into the darkness. Miss Carey could hear Ahmad's voice raised in warning tones to Datta; then a period of silence. At the foot of the ghat steps an alligator thrust his snout out of the water, flushed crimson with the glow of sunset, and stared with lightless green eyes at Miss Carey, as one who had ventured to trespass on his domain. She withdrew a few paces from the steps by way of precaution, and remained in a suspense that carried with it no consideration for the insecurity of her own position. Presently she started forward as Ahmad Kerim came from within, bearing the limp form of Dr. Fraser in his arms: even as a child; for Ahmad Kerim's strength was



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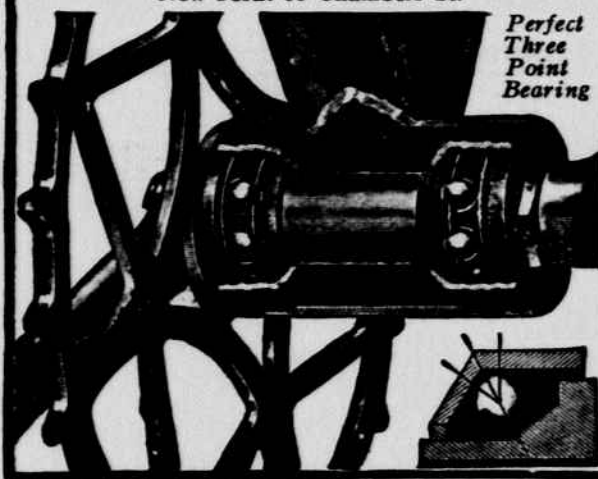
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of the North, and his muscles of the nature of iron.

"Memsahib," he whispered, laying Fraser's body down according to her directions, "I do not know, but I think he may not yet be dead; otherwise those accursed birds would not be outside."

Then he dashed after Datta, who was slinking off into the jungle.

Miss Carey made her examination quickly. Dr. Fraser was nearly gone, and only a spark of life seemed to remain. Even of that she was hardly sure. Certainly a few more hours in that tomblike ghat would have extinguished the last chance of restoration. As it was, Datta was impressed into a service that boded ill for him, and with Ahmad's assistance the apparently lifeless form was borne gently back to camp.

For Miss Carey followed then a fight that many a physician knows. She gave general directions for the camp, and set herself to the sole task of saving one of her own kind, a comrade in the field. Of the night that fell and dragged through the interminable hot hours—the tense strain of watching, listening, and waiting for that flicker of life, that slightest sign of an upward turn—also many a physician could speak; only he regards it merely in the line of his work and says nothing about it.

At intervals a hand drew aside one of the flaps, and a grave face appeared in the opening.

"It is I, Ahmad Kerim. The Memsahib's servant wishes her to know that he does not sleep this night."

On one of these occasions she was prompted to ask some questions. "Ahmad, what has become of Datta?"

"That man is tied to a tree with his own turban."

"And where is your wife? I have not seen her since the afternoon."

"She has gone from this place, which is not good for her."

"By the way, is it not strange I have not had a reply to my telegram from medical headquarters?"

Ahmad shrugged his shoulders expressively. "Perhaps the telegram did not go on the lightning wire, Memsahib; but I think we shall know all in the morning."

THE herald of the morning seemed to be a stamping of horses' hoofs outside the tent, and a clear English voice demanding to know if Dr. Carey could be seen. Dr. Carey came forth in an answer to the summons, just as an officer in police uniform swung off his horse.

"Miss—ah—Dr. Carey, I believe. I am Dawson, you know, of the police. Your servant's wife tramped a precious long distance down the railway to my place, and told me of your position. A most remarkable performance! So, of course, I came at once. I—I hope you have managed to do something for Fraser."

"Come in and see for yourself," she invited him with a triumphant smile.

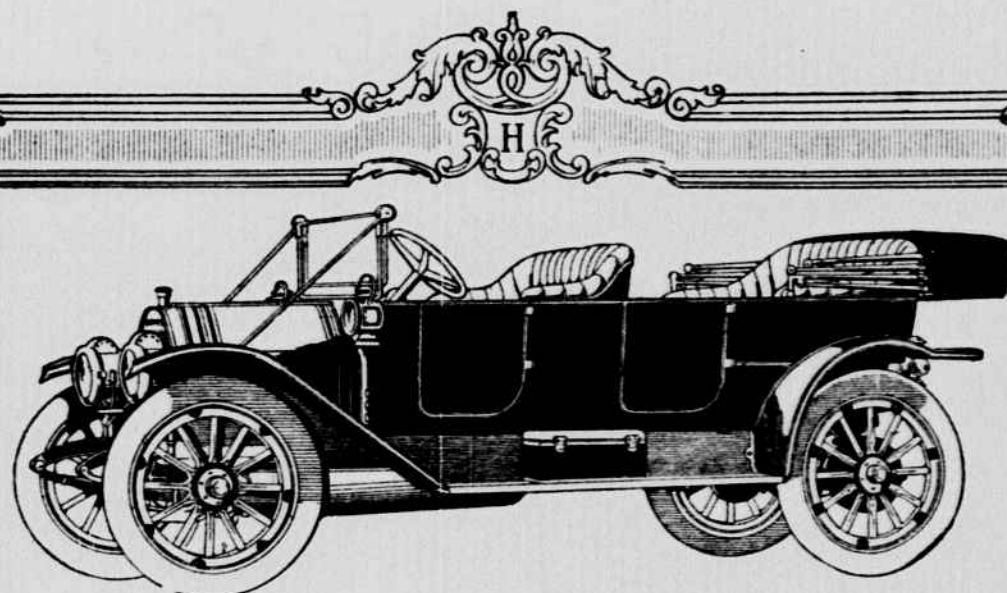
Dawson followed her into the tent, and stood for some minutes regarding the features of the man she had snatched from the ghat of death. Presently he lifted his eyes and looked at her out of their blue depths of frankness.

"By Jove! Well done!"

They were four very simple words; but the unalloyed sincerity in which they were spoken, the circumstances, the hour, and Miss Carey's physical exhaustion, nearly broke down her self control. You see, there is no hero fund, no medals, sometimes not even thanks, for the physician who risks his life to save a patient, and we are all likely to fail before the unfamiliar or the unexpected. Miss Carey, of course, recovered herself, and talked in a purely professional way of the case, remarking that Dr. Fraser had been fortunate in possessing surprising vitality. Perhaps so!

AFTER this there remains but a finishing touch; yet what would life have been to him who came out from that temple ghat without it? Dawson took hold of the situation, and a message went swiftly to medical headquarters. Also Ahmad Kerim had the infinite satisfaction of marching Datta to prison, and in the name of Dawson Sahib frightening the native police magistrate for the things he had not done. Medical headquarters promptly sent relief, thus enabling Miss Carey to devote her care to Fraser.

Gradually he came back to life, and wondered—wondered for a space concerning the bandage she wore round her forearm. His arm too was bandaged. Presently he connected these things professionally, and knew that the blood which flowed in his veins was her blood, that his life was her life. But, though a physician, there was nothing unfeminine about her; at least not when he laid his hand upon hers and spoke those words which cannot be set down fittingly on paper.



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